Must the Woman Always Pay?

The Vengeance of Henry Jarroman

By ROY VICKERS

He Forces a Girl to Expiate Another's Sin

Jarroman Is Freed

"ONE-NINE-THREE, Henry Jarroman, forty-eight, sentenced to death, Central Criminal Court, November first, nineteen hundred, for the murder of Charles Eddis, commuted to penal servitude for life, to be released by routine order C.72. Received here for discharge, third ultimo. Advance, Jarroman."

As the police clerk finished his routine statement, a man stepped out of the line of some half dozen convicts who were awaiting their discharge from this London Police Court.

The superintendent in charge looked up with something that might almost have been interest. A man who had served twenty years' penal servitude was a rarity. That a man should have sprung from the educated classes, that he should have forfeited his automatic reductions of sentence, and made no fewer than three abortive attempts to break prison, was another unusual feature. Moreover, a whisper of the gossip of the guard who had brought him from Dartmoor had reached the superintendent's ears—whispers of a strange turn of fortune's wheel.

"You are a free man; you can go"

He glanced at the man's face and nodded to himself. It was not the face of the regular convict, nor yet the face of the gentleman crook. The man had availed himself of the privilege now granted in the later months of a long confinement to grow a beard. A trimmed tuft of iron-gray concealed the lower part of his face and threw into sharp relief the high, nasegetic cheekbones. The wide-set, heavily lidded eyes ignored his surroundings and unexpectedly made the superintendent feel small. It was as if twenty years in prison had not robbed the man of a sense of intellectual superiority to those about him.

There was something else in the eyes, too. They showed no trace of the emotion that would be expected in a man from whom the fetters of twenty years were being unlocked. That would have been understandable enough—men were often crushed beyond the power of acute feeling; but then their eyes always showed listlessness. The eyes of 193, Henry Jarroman, showed fixity of purpose. His expression was that of a man who is submitting to a momentary interruption of an important task.

"Sign here, Jarroman," said the superintendent, handing him a paper. "This is your discharge."

The ex-convict took the pen and signed without the faintest trace of unsteadiness. To the questions asked him before his discharge was handed to him, the man answered laconically. At last all formalities were completed.

"All right. You're a free man now. You can go."

With the leisured, unhurried step that came of long years of marching, Jarroman left the room. In the corridor outside the man on duty stopped him.

"There's a gentleman come to fetch yer, a Mr. Theed. You'd better come along o' me and I'll take yer to 'im."

Down the corridor the couple passed and stopped at a door labeled, "Waiting Room."

"You'll find your pal in there. No need to knock on the door, you're a free man now."

Twenty Years' Changes.

Jarroman opened the door. There was a single occupant of the room, a man of about his own age. He was fleshy and too well fed. He had watery eyes that seemed perpetually to be on the verge of weeping for the sorrows of humanity. The other features of his face, in spite of their fleshiness, gave an odd suggestion of piety, and his voice as he spoke was unctuously sentimental.

"Jarroman, my poor, dear friend. At last! At last!"

Jarroman was taken aback as he felt his hand being pressed. He had the impression that the man who was greeting him was about to weep. Moreover, in spite of his iron self-control, he was undeniably startled and momentarily impressed by the other's silk hat, frock coat and dove waistcoat. He had to tell himself that this was Theed, the struggling young solicitor who had prepared his defense—and bungled it—twenty years ago.

"You are Theed, aren't you? I should not have known you," he said with a curtness that might have jarred the other's feelings.

"Of course, not! Of course, not!" said Theed. "The hand of time has been laid upon us both, my dear Jarroman. But I should have known you at once. You will never, never persuade me that you are not your real self in spite of the suffering which I dare not even think about. But we must have a long, long talk, my dear Jarroman." His voice took on a pained look as he added:

"I wonder—ah—er—that is—may I ask whether the authorities have given you to understand that the—er—ah—proceedings are at an end?"

Jarroman nearly missed his meaning. He had not heard that kind of conversation for twenty years.

"Yes," he said abruptly, "I am free."

Theed opened the door of the waiting room, and, linking his arm in that of the ex-convict, led him proudly past the men on duty at the gate.

A smart tourist car was waiting by the pavement. The chauffeur saluted as Theed and his companion appeared. Theed opened the door and followed Jarroman into the car, which glided through North London to Regent's Park, the chauffeur having received orders to drive to Theed's office by a circuitous route through the West End.

Theed had expected Jarroman to be impressed by the car. The motor, he had remembered, had been in its infancy when Jarroman had received his sentence. It was probably the first time he had ever driven in one. All the same, Jarroman seemed to take it for granted. He was as unimpressed by the car as by the crowded streets, and later the wooded beauty of the park. Theed hastened to supply the deficiency.

"Ah. It's good to drive through London again, eh, Jarroman?" he remarked.

"It's better than walking, I suppose," replied Jarroman. "Are we on our way to your office?"

"We shall arrive there eventually," said Theed. "I thought you would first like to have a look about you. Things must have changed so much since—it happened. See how many motors there are on the streets. At any time an airplane—a flying machine, you know—may appear above our heads. And then, of course, the war has done much."

"The war?" echoed Jarroman. "Oh, yes! We heard there was a war. It was against Germany, wasn't it? I suppose we won?"

"You Are a Rich Man"

"My poor, poor friend!" ejaculated Theed as if the words were being torn from him. "It is a terrible thing that has happened to you. If I can only make you understand how my heart bleeds at the thought of your sufferings. The one consolation to me is that it has been vouchsafed to me to make your circumstances, for the rest of your life compensate a little—a very little—for the cruelty of the past. The time has come, my dear Jarroman, to turn our backs upon the horrors that have been and face a roseate future—for you are a rich man, Jarroman—a rich man."

"So I gathered from your letter," said Jarroman unemotionally. "You stated no more than the bare fact."

"I would have considered it imprudent, as well as unnecessary, to give details," said Theed. "I knew the prison officials would read everything, and you might naturally not wish your affairs to be talked about. Your wealth has come through your land in Somerset."

"Thirty acres," said Jarroman reflectively. "If I remember rightly, it used to yield some eighteen pounds per year. I thought it was sold to pay your charges for my defense?"

"I tried to sell it, Jarroman, in accordance with your instructions, but, if you will believe me, I could not find a buyer. See in what a strange way the finger of destiny moves! When the war broke out the Government decided to put an airplane factory on your land. I persuaded them to pay a rental of five hundred a year."

"I thought you said—rich?" said Jarroman.

"Wait," replied Theed delightedly. "Just you wait until I've finished the tale. At the end of the war a private company took over the factory. They applied for another three acres on which to build houses for their work people. A branch line was running to the factory. I drove as hard a bargain as I could in your interests, but only raised the revenue by another five hundred—a paltry thousand a year—for something under ten acres. Those houses for the work people have never been built, Jarroman, because in digging for the foundations one of the men, who had been studying in a night school, noted a deposit of earth that suggested the presence of ore.

"To use a vulgarism, my dear Jarroman, I was on it like a bird. I will not bore you with the details. I first rewarded the man for his smartness by the gift of a five-pound note, then I joined hands with the airplane company. The housing scheme was abandoned, the factory blown up—and last year your estate received twenty thousand pounds in mining royalties. That amount has already been exceeded this year, and increasing returns are expected. I have refused an offer of two hundred thousand pounds for your holding in the concern. You can count on a revenue of between twenty and thirty thousand pounds per annum—that is to say, your personal income is between four and six hundred pounds per week, my dear Jarroman. Moreover, as soon as we have gone through the preliminaries of opening a current account, you will find that a solid sum of some thirty thousand pounds is standing to your credit. The other ten thousand has been partly absorbed in charges."

Theed lay back on the cushions, panting with pleasure as he delivered his report. He waited for protestations of amazement from Jarroman—but none came.

Not Stunned by Good Fortune

"He is stunned by the good news," thought Theed; but, looking at Jarroman from the corner of his eye, he decided the latter did not look stunned. He wore the expression of a man who is carefully sizing up a difficult proposition.

"Isn't it astounding!" cried Theed.

Jarroman shrugged his shoulders.

"It's a matter of blind luck," he said. "It has happened before." He added in a tone of the utmost conventionality: "I am obliged to you for what you have done. I hope you have made the transaction profitable to yourself also."

"I have, of course, deducted the charges and commission allowed me by the Law Society," said Theed stiffly. "I require no more than my just fee. My real recompense is the knowledge that I have been the means, however humble, of—ah—helping the sun of prosperity to shine upon a life which hitherto has been lived in shadow."

Jarroman emitted a scornful laugh that faintly alarmed the other for his sanity. And again there was silence. Then:

"Have you anything to tell me about my daughter?"

The fleshy hands of the solicitor clenched.

"I am not in touch with her," he answered, "though I have no doubt I could find her in a few days if you wish it. I do not know whether you are aware that, after your conviction, your wife——"

"Once and for all," cut in Jarroman, "I wish to hear nothing about my wife. I have no interest in her whatsoever. With my daughter it is otherwise. She—was just beginning to bubble—when I last saw her. She is twenty-two now, Theed." Again came the laugh of concentrated bitterness. "I shall meet a strange young woman who will probably have changed her name to conceal the fact that I am her father. Well, this little stunt of yours in Somerset will enable me to compensate her for any disadvantages that may have resulted from her parentage. Find her, please."

"Yes, yes, assuredly. I will put the wheels in motion as soon as we reach the office. But in the meantime, my dear Jarroman, I beg you to keep your mind from the past. Look about you. Think of the glorious new life that is opening up to you."

The car was gliding down Park lane.

"With virtually unlimited wealth you have the world at your feet. It is like the magician's wand. You have but to utter a wish and it is granted. Look about you! These mansions, the strongold of the elect of the nation—you have but to pick on any of these should you desire it, and with a stroke of the pen you can make the occupants glad to leave you in undisputed possession."

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The Young Lady Across the Way

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